

REMARKS

Rejected claims 1, 2 and 11, 12 have been canceled without prejudice, and the subject matter thereof as amended has been rewritten and presented herein as, respectively, claims 18, 19 and 20, 21.

Claims 1-7 and 9-16 (and 17?) (now 18, 19, 3-7 and 9, 10, 20, 21, 13-16) (and 17?) have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Legh-Smith et al. '419 in view of Zhai '930. This rejection is respectfully traversed with respect to these claims as amended herein (and now presented as claims 18, 19, 3-7, 9, 10, 20, 21 and 13-17).

The independent apparatus and method claims 18, 20 now include various recitations of “a criteria table for storing a target value for each of the items included in the electronic document and a score that is predetermined in accordance with a value of each of the items; a partner table for storing a score that is evaluated for attributes of each of the plurality of business partners; a score counter provided corresponding to the received electronic document; a controller configured, for each of the items included in the electronic document, to: compare the value of the item with the target value to reject documents including an item that does not meet the target value”. In addition, these claims variously recite “for each of the documents that are not rejected, extracting from the criteria table a score corresponding to the value of the item to add the extracted score to the score

counter; and (c) for each of the documents that are not rejected, extracting from the partner table a score evaluated for attributes of a partner from which the documents is received, to add the extracted score to the score counter, wherein the method further comprises the step of assigning, in accordance with a value of the score counter, a priority to each of the documents that are not rejected”.

The claims 19, 3-7, 9, 10, 21 and 13-17 variously depend from claims 18, 20 and are submitted to be patentable for that reason, and additionally for such further distinctive recitations as “the transferred electronic documents are temporarily stored in an external server provided outside the classification system; and wherein, when a predetermined amount of the electronic documents are stored in the external server or when a predetermined time has elapsed, the electronic documents stored in the external server are transferred to the classification system”, or “in response to a request for printing the electronic document, to place an attached file on a predetermined position of the paper if the attached file is included in the electronic document”, or “a determination result storage for storing the value of the assigned priority for each of the electronic documents; wherein the controller is further configured to provide a page in which a user can modify the value of the assigned priority; and wherein the controller is further configured to update the value of the assigned priority stored in the determination result storage in response to an instruction for modification provided by the user on the page”.

These aspects of the claimed invention thus process each item included in an electronic document to compare the value of the item with the target value to reject documents including an item that does not meet the target value. And, for each of the documents that are not rejected, a score is extracted from the criteria table corresponding to the value of the item to add the extracted score to the score counter. Further, the claimed invention comprises a partner table for storing a score that is evaluated for attributes for each of the plurality of business partners. Additionally, for each of the documents that is not rejected, the claimed invention extracts from the partner table a score evaluated for attributes of a partner from which the document is received, and adds the extracted score to the score counter. And, a priority is assigned to each of the documents that is not rejected in accordance with a value of the score counter.

These aspects of the claimed invention are not disclosed or even suggested by the cited references considered either alone or in the combination proposed by the Examiner. Specifically, Legh-Smith et al. '419 discloses scoring each of the documents identified in search results provided by at least one search engine on the basis of the respective contents thereof in accordance with predetermined criteria. (Col. 2, lines 5-9). Such a scoring operation is shown in Figure 7, and is understood to be performed on all of the documents identified in search results.

In contrast, the claimed invention compares each item in the document with a target value. A document including an item that does not meet the target value is rejected and scoring operation is performed only on the documents that are not rejected. Such limiting of the scoring operation is not disclosed in Legh-Smith et al. '419. Further, this reference discloses (e.g., Column 11, lines 14-36) that the scoring operation is performed only based on the contents of the document. In contrast, the claimed invention not only scores associated with the item in the received document but also scores associated with the attributes of the partner from which the document is received, for adding to the score counter. Such a scoring operation considering the attributes of the partner from which the document is received is not disclosed in Legh-Smith et al. '419.

Thus merely adding the scoring scheme of Zhai '930 fails to remedy this deficient disclosure of Legh-Smith et al. '419 since Zhai '930 is understood to score documents against selected user profiles, and compare such scores against selected threshold values to determine whether a document scores favorably, for example, against scores of a set of reference documents. And, despite the Examiner's assessment of "Zhai discloses that the profile scoring mechanism assigns a score to any document... where the score represents the relevance of the document to a user criteria...", it is submitted that this reference combined with Legh-Smith et al. '419 fails to yield any semblance of scoring and rejection in a manner as now claimed by

applicants, and also fails to establish even a *prima facie* basis from which a proper determination of obviousness can be made. It is therefore respectfully submitted that claims 3-7, 9, 10, 13, 16, 17 and 19-21 are now patentably distinguishable over the cited art.

Claim 8 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Legh-Smith et al. '419 and Zhai '930, as applied to claim 1, further in view of Lai '290. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

This claim, which depends from newly-presented independent claim 19, is submitted to be patentable for that reason and for the further specific recitations of “the controller is further configured to determine whether the electronic document is acceptable based on the assigned priority” and “the controller is further configured to generate an electronic mail for a rejection notice if it is determined that the electronic document is not acceptable, and to generate an electronic mail for an acceptance notice if it is determined that the electronic document is acceptable”.

These aspects of the claimed invention are not disclosed or even suggested by Lai '290 which is understood to detail a transaction between a merchant and customer that is implemented through an escrow agent which controls approval of a shipment in response to collection of payment therefor. Thus, as the Examiner correctly observes, neither Legh-Smith et al. '419 nor Zhai '930 disclose generating email rejection notice relative to an unacceptable document. And, these references

also fail to disclose scoring in a manner as claimed by applicants, as discussed in the above Remarks. Thus, merely combining escrow-controlled transactions as disclosed by Lai '290 fails to establish even a *prima facie* basis from which a proper determination of obviousness can be made. It is therefore respectfully submitted that dependent claim 8 is now patentably distinguishable over the cited art.

Reconsideration and allowance of all claims over the prior art (including the reference cited but not applied) are solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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